

Philip K. Dick's Lateral Worlds

A Glimpse of Track C

Eric Twose (as Etienne de L'Amour)

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ishrāqī institute

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About the Author

Eric Twose has been studying the Sufi mystical tradition, and especially the works of Idries Shah, since around 1985, and more recently he has studied Illuminationism, Western philosophy and tradition, and modern depth psychology.

Running online groups since around 1999, he also acts as a janitor for the groups *The Caravanserai* and the *ishraqi institute*, where he has met many wonderful friends and kindred spirits from around the world.

He writes mystical adventure as Etienne de L'Amour, and soft sci-fi and psi-fi as H.M. Forester. You can find his works, available for free download, at the web site sherpoint.uk.

About the ishrāqī institute

The ishrāqī institute is an independent, multicultural and multidisciplinary, virtual, non-profit think-do-and-be tank.

The institute operates a Facebook group for folk interested in the work and “invisible college” of Iain McGilchrist (*The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*), Henry Corbin (imaginal world), Tom Cheetham (*The World Turned Inside Out; Green Man, Earth Angel; All the World an Icon; Imaginal Love*), James Hillman (*Re-visioning Psychology*), Peter Kingsley (*Reality; Cataphalque: Carl Jung and the End of Humanity*), Gary Lachman (*Lost Knowledge of the Imagination; The Secret Teachers of the Western World*), Carl Jung (active imagination; individuation), et al.

Of particular, core interest to the ishrāqī institute is traditional wisdom, not only of the East but especially the lost knowledge and traditions of the West, such as the pre-Socratic philosophers, Neoplatonism, the Renaissance, Romanticism, and a return to the depths of soul.

By multidisciplinary, we include not only the obvious arts and sciences, but a wide range of orientations, vocations and callings, including: mythology; creativity; art and poetry; crafts; alternative and appropriate technology and environmentalism; education; traditional and modern psychology and sociology; minority interests and the “off-beat”; cross-cultural study and traditional wisdom; equality and humanitarianism; spirituality and non-dogmatic religion; philosophy; cultural creatives; polymathy; altruism and love; and not least humour – because you never know from where a solution may arise.

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In “If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some of the Others”, an essay delivered as a speech at the second *Festival International de la Science-Fiction de Metz*, France, in September 1977, science fiction author Philip K. Dick talks of his experiences in alternate realities, which resulted from the sodium pentothal (colloquially known as a “truth drug”) administered to him before dental surgery; experiences which gradually began to unfold over a period of weeks.

Dick asks “what if there exists a plurality of universes arranged along a sort of lateral axis, which is to say at right angles to the flow of linear time?” That is to say, in branches of alternative history that are imminent, penetrating our own, yet not discernible, nor experienced, by all, since most are largely confined to the everyday consensus reality of the masses. That is, the predominant worldview which is generally agreed to be reality, based on a consensus view, but not the only possible reality, and quite probably a rather lowly conception of reality, due to the low levels or crudity of consciousness of we beleaguered citizens of dear Mother Earth.

He further suggest that there is an ongoing tussle between a cosmic entity he terms The Programmer or Programmer-Reprogrammer – whom many would call God – who manipulates variables in the historical “code” of our existence, or matrix (yes, he

actually used that term), in order to make improvements, and what he terms a dark counterplayer (the Programmer anticipating and successfully meeting the counterplayer's chess moves). This causes branching, and yet when we encounter or temporally pass through the changes that have been made, we will find ourselves on a modified trajectory, yet crucially with no knowledge or memory remaining of our previous trajectory, other than either vague feelings of *deja vu*, or else (as in Dick's own case) perhaps a strange experience, or recovered memories, of perhaps having lived through a rather different reality to that of the consensus ... and a desire to keep these revelations to oneself out of fear of being thought delusional.

Regarding the branching, Dick recalled two tracks, A and B, and had a brief glimpse of another: Track C. Track A was a realm of brutal tyranny, and a dark prison of existence. Track B, he saw as “a much lighter tyranny, a far stupider one”, through which those of us still continuing on this earthly journey had passed to get where we now are. Track C he saw as the prospect of a wonderful “garden or park of peace and beauty, a world superior to ours, rising into existence”, which he likened to the “Arcady of the Greco-Roman pagan world” (the beloved Arcadia, seen in the art and poetry of, for example, the Romantics; an earthly paradise).

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Consensus Reality and the Real World

Let's leave Philip K. Dick's ideas aside for now, and I'll attempt to offer some of my own ideas.

The Sufi mystics talk of a Real World – a much more refined world in sharp contrast to what we mistakenly term the everyday “real world” of concrete, glass, sex, politics, addiction, delusion; etc. I see this as an imminent world, coexistent with our own; that is occupying and commingling with our own space and, being outside linear time, touching our time at all times. I believe that the dark magician Aleister Crowley said that we are as close to ancient Egypt as we ever were, and others have said that at certain times of year, and in certain

places, the veils between this world and that of “spirit” are thinner and more permeable.

I'm drawn to the thoughts of physicists when, in considering material objects such as planets, they speak of the creation of gravity wells, or the deformation of space-time in the vicinity of especially celestial, but to a lesser extent less massive objects. You could also look at existence as consisting of an increasing density as we proceed from gaseous states down to gross physical solids, and spiritually- or mystically-inclined folk often think along similar lines with a continuum between what they see as spiritual, soul, astral, ethereal, mental and physical planes or levels of reality; or they speak of the influence of stars, the Sun, successive planets, our own Moon, and Mother Earth herself.

If I may tentatively adopt an analogy, again along similar lines: I see the everyday consensus reality as being a very deep gravitational well, not of materiality but of consciousness itself, and here I see consciousness pervading the cosmos, not simply in human life, and certainly not just in our heads. I see the brain as a receiver and a transducer, not as the originator of consciousness, and I certainly don't agree that consciousness is a mere illusion. I see cultural phenomena and movements as exerting a “pull” on humanity as a whole, on civilisations and societies, enterprises, groups, families, and individuals – indeed, on all of nature, of which we are a dominant part. We “gravitate” to certain groupings, ideas and phenomena, you might say. And, if we can overcome or override the peer pressure of consensus reality in certain situations and, more globally, if we can achieve the

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necessary “escape velocity”, then we can indeed come into contact with alternative worldviews or alternative realities that are closer than our jugular vein – so near and yet so far, because this is not an easy task for most, and nigh-impossible to achieve for many, especially given the state of the world today.

As James Hillman and Michael Ventura write in *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy & the World's Getting Worse*:

“Of course, a culture as manically and massively materialistic as ours creates materialistic behavior in its people, especially in those people who've been subjected to nothing but the destruction of imagination that this culture calls education, the destruction of autonomy it calls work, and the destruction of activity it calls entertainment.”

Ways and Means

Psychoactive substances will give you glimpses through the veils – perhaps even truly cosmic experiences – but that can be a dangerous and perhaps counterfeit path to go down, without experienced instructors. On the one hand you could say that there are no shortcuts to wholeness of being or enlightenment; on the other hand you could say that shortcuts abound to fool the unwary and unprepared.

And exploration of the depths of the Self through Active Imagination, spiritual practises, and mystical paths can lead you

toward emancipation, welcome, and peace (*sakina* and *itmi'nan*), often at the expense of surrendering one's everyday preoccupations, the sovereignty of the ego (the ego making a poor and overbearing master, but a useful servant), and submission to one's teacher, one's school, and ultimately to the Divine or Sacred – however you want to conceive that, be it the Soul of the World (*Anima Mundi*), Tao, Source, One, God, Essence; etc.

Educating yourself can help you so far (so long as you do not get waylaid), as can developing a passion (becoming wholehearted in your approach). A. Hameed Ali (aka A. H. Almaas) asserts that there can be more to reading than “merely reading”:

“[There] are books written by realized individuals and teachers, from various traditions and teachings ... In this kind of reading the learning is not cerebral, but more of accessing the states of consciousness of the writer or teacher. The books function as conduits for the transmission of their states of realization. I happened to develop the sensitivity to be open to such direct transmission through the word.”

Active engagement with the materials and intra-psychic and inter-psychic processes is more important than the defaults of left-brain intellect and consumerism (as are “beauty, truth and the good”, cultivating a sense of wonder, and engaging in the arts, crafts, and humanities). As the healer Mair Freida tells her students in Etienne de L'Amour's *The Host and the Guests*: “Don't just stand there and nod.

The mind observes and cogitates, the heart engages, and I would encourage you to engage with the process.”

Three Forms of Knowledge

“In *The Way of the Sufi*, however, the thinker, writer, and Sufi teacher Idries Shah writes about the three forms of knowledge, and it is the third form that we are concerned with here:

Ibn el-Arabi of Spain instructed his followers in this most ancient dictum:

There are three forms of knowledge. The first is intellectual knowledge, which is in fact only information and the collection of facts, and the use of these to arrive at further intellectual concepts. This is intellectualism.

Second comes the knowledge of states, which includes both emotional feeling and strange states of being in which man thinks that he has perceived something supreme but cannot avail himself of it. This is emotionalism.

Third comes real knowledge, which is called the Knowledge of Reality. In this form, man can perceive what is right, what is true, beyond the boundaries of thought and sense. Scholastics and scientists concentrate upon the first form of knowledge. Emotionalists and experimentalists use the

second form. Others use the two combined, or either one alternately.

But the people who attain to truth are those who know how to connect themselves with the reality which lies beyond both these forms of knowledge. These are the real Sufis, the Dervishes who have Attained.”

Before Enlightenment, the Laundry

That can be a long road, though there may come a point when everything “clicks” – perhaps after a constellation of minor impacts and “Aha!” moments – and one finds enlightenment (or, more rarely, one can be suddenly enlightened); even finding oneself present in a whole new reality, like a stranger in a strange and yet strangely-familiar land where the majority of other people are going about the same, old everyday lives as usual, and yet now conscious of also being among kindred spirits. This could be likened to crossing over to the sunny side of the street. Or simply crossing a threshold. There's no need to knock, the door is already open; inside the tavern there is revelry, and a welcome chalice of mulled wine awaits. But do leave your donkey at the door. As the Buddhist or Zen saying has it: “Before enlightenment, the laundry. After enlightenment, the laundry” or again, less pithily: “Before I sought enlightenment, the mountains were mountains and the rivers were rivers. While I sought enlightenment, the mountains were not mountains and the rivers were not rivers.

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After I reached satori, the mountains were mountains and the rivers were rivers."



In such a station (or in a transient state), one may also be conscious of the fact that “wisdom” can be found not only in and through interaction with these everyday people, but in the most apparently mundane incidents and experiences. Someone may be talking about working in their attic over the weekend because there's no point in mending their fences while the wind was up, and you suddenly “twig” that there's a parallel conversation going on here, with deeper meanings, like a fine signal superimposed, multiplexed, on the everyday carrier wave.

The Hidden World

As Idries Shah quoted in his book, *A Perfumed Scorpion*: “What the self-imagined mystic seeks only in his meditation is visible to the Sufi on every street corner and in every alleyway.” Or as Rumi wrote, again quoted by Shah:

The people of Love are hidden within the populace;

Like a good man surrounded by the bad.

The hidden world has its clouds and rain, but of a different kind.

Its sky and sunshine are of a different kind.

This is made apparent only to the refined ones—

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those not deceived by the seeming completeness of the ordinary world.

In "Confessions" by the poet Kathleen Raine, we read:

Wanting to know all

I overlooked each particle

Containing the whole

Unknowable.

Intent on one great love, perfect,

Requited and for ever,

I missed love's everywhere

Small presence, thousand-guised.

And lifelong have been reading

Book after book, searching

For wisdom, but bringing

Eric Twose

Only my own understanding.

Forgive me, forgiver,

Whether you be infinite omniscient

Or some unnoticed other

My existence has hurt.

Being what I am

What could I do but wrong?

Yet love can bring

To heart healing

To chaos meaning.

Only now do you realise that all this wonder was around you, and even running through you, all the time – except that you, like so many others, were blisslessly ignorant and unaware of it. As the Sufi mystics would say: “She who tastes, knows”, to which Shah added: “But he who only thinks he tastes – will not leave anyone alone.” As Tenzing

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Jangbu Rinchen maintained, however: "All that matters is that you have made it to my door." Sin is transcended; missing the mark is transcended; even the need for forgiveness, though on offer to those of us who need it, is nevertheless transcended, because as errant wayfarers in this land of degeneration, we really are all in the same boat (if not in this phase of our life, then some other phase, or other incarnation, or in some other way).

As William Shakespeare wrote in *As You Like It*:

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players:

They have their exits and their entrances;

And one man in his time plays many parts.

Never Lose the Way

Don't lose the trail

of wisdom's scent.

While on this hunt,

don't go astray,

Eric Twose

worrying if every little thing
is good or bad.

You are the traveler,
you are the path,
and you are the destination.

Be careful
never
to lose
the way to yourself.

~ Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi, *Love's Alchemy: Poems in the Sufi Tradition* by David Fideler (translator), Sabrineh Fideler (translator).

Notes

- Sakina: peace, stillness, serenity, tranquility, indwelling presence. See also Shekhinah.
- Itmi'nan: satisfaction, peacefulness, surety.

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Remember the old saying and take heed:

“Man is asleep. Must he die before he wakes up?”

(From the BBC television documentary, *One Pair of Eyes*: “Dreamwalkers”).

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